

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release

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"Come Enjoy the New Educational Exhibits at the Visitors Center and See the Amazing Waterfowl on Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge"

On Saturday, December 8 the Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge will hold an Open House to introduce the public to our new Visitors Center and to have them experience the beauty of Mattamuskeet.

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge is renowned for waterfowl. Widely recognized as one of the best birding sites in North Carolina, the refuge is especially popular in the fall and winter, when hundreds of thousands of migratory birds, including a wide variety of ducks, geese and swans migrate to Lake Mattamuskeet and surrounding areas. Visitors ranging from enthusiastic birders to casual observers come to view waterfowl in this magnificent setting. In addition to waterfowl, bald eagles also winter at Lake Mattamuskeet and are frequently seen perched in trees along the lakeshore. Everything from otters and muskrats to warblers and wading birds are on the wildlife-watcher's menu.

New natural resource exhibits and dioramas have been installed in the Center to explain the history of Lake Mattamuskeet and showcase many of the plants and animals that live on the refuge. There's even a Virtual Airboat Tour of Lake Mattamuskeet as well as interactive learning displays for kids of all ages. The Visitors Center will be open from 8AM to 4PM during the Open House.

We will also be providing two guided birding opportunities for the public that day. Enjoy an interpretive bird walk on the trails and boardwalks near the Visitors Center to view waterfowl and migratory song birds along the edge of Lake Mattamuskeet. You can also reserve a seat to enjoy an open air tram ride to view waterfowl on the east side of the refuge.

The 2012 one-hour public tram tours are scheduled for Saturday morning, December 8 at 7:30, 9:00, 10:30, and 12:30 pm and promise to be a wonderful experience for participants. Refuge staff have conducted these once a year tours annually since 1984 to allow visitors this special opportunity to view wildlife in areas that are seasonally closed to the public. In order to accommodate more people and to provide a more intimate connection with the refuge and to provide an excellent opportunity to view the waterfowl along the tour's route, the 2012 tours will be conducted from an open-air tram. So come prepared for the weather and the sights.

We're taking the 'Let's Go Outside!' and 'Connecting People with Nature' programs literally, and we're excited to continue offering this unique opportunity to Mattamuskeet visitors! The tours

are free; however, space is limited, **so registration is required.** Non-registered visitors may be turned away, if space is not available.

Interested individuals and families may reserve their seats on the tram starting on **Tuesday, November 20** by calling the refuge office at 252/926-4021. To give everyone a fair chance to reserve a space on the tram, we will not accommodate large groups or organizations during this event. Office hours are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday – Friday. Because there are a limited number of seats available on the tram, it is important to call early.

The meeting location for tram tours will be the Lake Landing parking area. If you need directions, please be sure to ask when you call to register. Tour participants are encouraged, but not required, to bring binoculars and bird identification books. Since this is an open-air tram, **it is critical that participants dress for cold weather, including heavy coats that will break the wind, scarfs, gloves, and especially hats.** Bringing a blanket along to keep you warm is always a good idea! Unless the weather is so bad it poses a safety hazard, the tours will go on, rain or shine, windy or calm.

So come on out to Mattamuskeet Refuge for a great time of connecting with nature and learning about our incredible wildlife resources and to enjoy our Visitors Center, boardwalks, observation platforms and trails.